

# **University-Raymond Commercial Historic District Preservation Program and Design Review Guidelines**

**St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission**



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## University-Raymond Commercial Historic District Preservation Program and Design Review Guidelines

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### I. Introduction

The following guidelines for design review will serve as the basis for the Heritage Preservation Commission's permit review decisions in the proposed University-Raymond Commercial Historic District. The guidelines define the most important elements of the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District's unique physical appearance and state the best means of preserving and enhancing these elements in rehabilitation or new construction. Their purpose is to assure that permit review will be based on clear standards rather than the tastes or personal opinions of individual commission members. When applying the guidelines, the Commission will also be considerate of clearly defined cases of economic hardship or deprivation of the owner of reasonable use of his/her property. Decisions of the Heritage Preservation Commission are subject to appeal to the City Council within ten days by anyone affected by the decision.

### General Intent

The City of Saint Paul, a Certified Local Government in the National Historic Preservation Program, has agreed to conduct its design review of locally designated heritage preservation sites and districts according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* (1995). The Standards are applied to projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. The ten Standards are:

1. *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
7. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

## **II. Restoration and Rehabilitation**

### **A. Masonry and Walls**

#### **Use of Materials:**

Original masonry and mortar should be retained whenever possible without the application of any surface treatment. A similar material should be used to repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated masonry. New masonry added to the structure or site, such as new foundations or retaining walls, should be compatible with the color, texture and bonding of original or existing masonry. Formstone, stucco, wood or metal siding, or paneling should not be used.

#### **Cleaning:**

Masonry should be cleaned only when necessary to halt deterioration or to remove graffiti and stains and always with the gentlest method possible such as low pressure water (under 300 psi) and soft bristle brushes. Brick and stone surface should not be sandblasted with dry or wet grit or other

abrasives. This method of cleaning erodes the hard surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Chemical cleaning products which could have an adverse chemical reaction with the masonry material such as acid on limestone or marble should not be used. Chemical solvents should not be used at all except for removing iron and oil stains. It is preferable to use water with a non-ionic biodegradable detergent. Mortar should be repointed and window frames should be caulked before cleaning. Waterproof or water repellent coatings or surface consolidation treatments should not be applied unless required to solve a specific technical problem that has been studied and identified. Coatings are frequently unnecessary, expensive, and can accelerate deterioration of the masonry.

**Repointing:**

Repointing should be done on those mortar joints where there is evidence of moisture problems or when sufficient mortar is missing to allow water to stand on the mortar joint. Using pneumatic hammers to remove mortar can seriously damage the adjacent brick. Vertical joints should be hand chiseled. When repointing, it is important to use the same materials as the existing mortar. This includes matching the color, texture, coefficients of expansion and contraction, and ingredient ratio of the original mortar mix, creating a bond similar to the original. A professional mortar analysis can give this information. Repointing with Portland cement mortar may create a bond stronger than is appropriate for the building materials, possibly resulting in cracking or other damage. Old mortar should be duplicated in joint size, method of application and joint profile.

**Painting:**

The original or early color and texture of masonry surfaces should be retained, including early signage wherever possible. Brick or stone surfaces may have been painted or whitewashed for practical and aesthetic reasons. Paint should not be indiscriminately removed from masonry surfaces as this may subject the building to damage and change its appearance.

**B. Windows and Doors**

**Openings:**

Existing window and door openings should be retained. New window and door openings should not be introduced into the principal elevations. Enlarging or reducing window or door opening to fit stock window sash or new stock door sizes should not be done. Infilling of window openings or installing new openings may be permissible on secondary facades if standard sizes approximate the size and proportions of the opening.

Generally, a secondary facade will be considered as any facade not facing the street and not having the ornamentation and higher quality materials usually associated with street facades.

**Panes, Sashes and Hardware:**

It is desirable to retain original windows and doors, but they may need replacement for functional reasons. Replacement is clearly acceptable for functional reasons if new materials closely match original materials. Different materials may be acceptable on a case-by-case basis. Window panes should be two-way glass. No reflective or spandrel glass is permitted. The stylistic period or periods a building represents should be respected. Shutters are generally inappropriate in the district. Missing or irreparable windows should be replaced with new windows that match the original in material, size, general muntin and mullion proportion and configuration and reflective qualities of the glass. Replacement sash should not alter the setback relationship between window and wall. Heating and air conditioning units should not be installed in the window frames when the sash and frames may be damaged. Window installations should be considered only when all other viable heating and cooling systems would result in significant damage to historic materials. Window installations may be acceptable in minor facades.

**Storm Windows:**

Storm windows and doors should be compatible with the character of the building and should not damage window and door frames, or require removal of original windows and doors. Exterior storm windows should be appropriate in size and color and should be operable.

**Awnings and Canopies:**

Awnings and canopies should not be used when they conceal richly detailed entries and windows. Aluminum or plastic awnings shall not be used. Large or garish lettering shall not be used on awnings. Awnings should have a traditional shape such as a tent shape or be rounded when the opening is arched.

**Lintels, Arches, and Sills:**

Lintels, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods and steps should be retained or repaired if possible. Existing colors and textures should be matched when repairing these elements.

**Storefronts:**

Original or significant storefronts should be retained and repaired including windows, sash, doors, transoms, signage, and decorative features where such features contribute to the architectural and historic character of the building. Where original or early storefronts no longer exist or are too deteriorated to save, the commercial character of the building should be retained through: (1) contemporary design which is compatible with the scale, design, materials, color and texture of the historic buildings; or (2) an accurate restoration of the storefront based on historical research and physical evidence. Storefronts or new design elements on the ground floor, such as arcades, should not be introduced which alter the architectural and historic character of the building and its relationship with the street or its setting or which cause destruction of significant historic fabric. Materials which detract from the historic or architectural character of the building, such as mirrored glass, should not be used. Entrances through significant storefronts should not be altered.

#### **C. Roofs, Cornices and Details**

##### **Roof Shape:**

The original roof shape should be preserved. New skylights and vents should be behind and below parapet level. When the roof is visible from street level, the original material should be retained if possible, otherwise it should be replaced with new material that matches the old in composition, size, shape, color, and texture.

##### **Cornices and Other Details:**

All architectural features that give the roof its essential character should be preserved or replaced. Similar material should be used to repair/replace deteriorating or missing architectural elements such as cornices, brackets, railings, shutters, steps and chimneys, whenever possible. The intricacy of detail is least important for new elements at or near the roof line. The same massing, proportions, scale and design theme as the original should be retained.

### **III. Signs and Accessories**

Existing historic signs that reflect the development of the district should be preserved. These signs may be in the form of painted signs on buildings, surface mounted or projecting signs. Signs should be compatible with the character of the District and blend with the character of the structures on or near which they are placed. Signs should not conceal architectural detail, clutter the building's image, or distract from the unity of the facade but, rather, should complement the overall design.

A. **Materials:**

Sign materials should complement the materials of the related building and/or the adjacent buildings. Surface design elements should not detract from or conflict with the related structure's age and design in terms of identification symbol (logo), lettering, and related patterns or pictures. Materials used should be the same as those used for signs during the period of the building's construction, such as wood, wrought iron, steel, and metal grill work. Newer materials such as extruded aluminum and plastics may not be appropriate.

B. **Types:**

The sign type should enhance the building's design and materials. There are a number of types of signs which may be used: (1) single-faced; (2) projecting, double-faced; (3) three-dimensional; (4) painted wall signs; and (5) temporary signs.

C. **Location and Method of Attachment:**

There should be no sign above the cornice line or uppermost portion of a facade wall. Signs should not disfigure or conceal architectural details. Painted signs may be permissible on glass windows and doors. The facade should not be damaged in sign application, except for mere attachment. The method of attachment should respect the structure's architectural integrity and should become an extension of the architecture. Projecting signs should have a space separating them from the building. (Protection of architecture in method of attachment shall be regarded as a basis for granting variance of the normal zoning code prohibition against guy wire supports for projecting signs.)

D. **Lighting:**

Location of exterior lights should be appropriate to the structure. Signs should generally be lit from on the site. There should be no flashing, blinking, moving, or varying intensity lighting. Subdued lighting is preferred. Backlit fluorescent or exposed neon are generally inappropriate.

E. **Grills, Exhaust Fans, etc.**

Grills, exhaust outlets for air conditioners, bath and kitchen exhaust fans should be incorporated into filler panels, if possible. They may be painted the same color as the filler panel.

IV. **New Construction**

“New construction” refers to totally new structures, moved-in structures and new additions to existing structures.

Any new construction should possess height, massing, setback, materials and rhythms compatible with surrounding structures. The reproduction of historic design and details is recommended only for limited cases of infill or small scale construction. Guidelines for new construction focus on general rather than specific design elements in order to encourage architectural innovation.

A. **Setback**

There are a variety of setbacks expressed in the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District. However, new setbacks should relate to adjacent historic buildings

B. **Massing  
Volume  
Height**

Most of the structures of the district are distinguished by their boxy profiles; preservation of this aspect is the most essential element for maintaining district unity. New construction should be compatible with the massing, volume, and height, of existing structures in the historic district.

C. **Rhythm**

The rhythm in the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District can be found both in the relation of several buildings to each other, and in the relation of elements on a single building facade. Rhythm between buildings is usually distinguished by slight variations in height, windows and doors, and details, including vertical and horizontal elements. Rhythm may be accentuated by slight projections and recessions of the facade, causing the scale of the building to match that of its neighbors.

The rhythm of new construction should be compatible with that of existing structures.

D. **Roofs  
Cornices**

New roof, and cornice designs should be compatible with existing adjacent structures. Generally, roofs in the district are flat. It is more



important for roof edges to relate in size and proportion, than in detailing.

**E. Materials and Details**

Brick and pressed brick, Bedford stone and Mankato-Kasota stone, terra-cotta, ceramic tile, concrete, metal and glass are the most commonly used materials in the district.

The materials and details of new construction should relate to the materials and details of existing adjacent buildings. New buildings in the district should possess more detailing than typical modern commercial buildings, to respond to the surrounding buildings and to reinforce the human scale of the district. Walls of buildings in the district are generally of brick with stone trim. They display the colors of natural clay, dark red, buff, and brown. When walls are painted, similar earthtones are usually used.

**F. Windows  
Doors**

Windows should relate to those of existing buildings in the district in the ratio of solid to void, distribution of window openings, and window setback. The proportion, size, style, function and detailing of windows and doors in new construction should relate to that of existing adjacent buildings. Window and door frames should be wood or bronze-finished aluminum.

**G. Parking**

The preferred location of parking lots is behind the buildings rather than in front or beside them. If street frontage is the only option, the lots should be screened from street and sidewalk either by walls or plantings or both. If walls are used, their materials should be compatible with the walls of existing adjacent buildings. Walls should be at least 18" high. Walls or plantings should be located to disrupt the street plane as little as possible.

**H. Landscaping  
Street Furniture**

Traditional street elements of the area should be preserved. New street furniture and landscaping features should compliment the scale and character of the area.

## **V. Guidelines for Non-Contributing and Contemporary Buildings**

### **A. Change to Contributing Status**

A non-contributing building built within the period of significance but substantially altered may be reclassified as a contributing building, but it must be brought into compliance with its original historic facade by means of restoration or replication.

### **B. Non-Contributing and Contemporary Building Additions and Alterations**

Additions and alterations to non-contributing and contemporary buildings must be sympathetic and subordinate to original building and adjacent structures. These changes must help the original better fit its context. Guidelines for new construction shall apply to non-contributing and contemporary buildings.

## **VII. Demolition**

Proposals for demolishing structures, while reviewed with special care by the Heritage Preservation Commission, are not necessarily in conflict with district guidelines. When reviewing proposals for demolition of structures within the district, the Heritage Preservation Commission refers to Section 73.06(1)(2) of the Saint Paul Legislative Code which states the following:

In the case of the proposed demolition of a building, prior to approval of said demolition, the commission shall make written findings on the following: the architectural and historical merit of the building, the effect of the demolition on surrounding buildings, the effect of any proposed new construction on the remainder of the building (in case of partial demolition) and on surrounding buildings, and the economic value or usefulness of the building as it now exists or if altered or modified in comparison with the value or usefulness of any proposed structures designated to replace the present building or buildings.